

*editor's note: On April 20 and 25 the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society (MVAS) presented proclamations to the City of Las Cruces and to Dona Ana County advocating for dark skies to help birds with their annual spring and fall migrations. The national Audubon Society launched The Migratory Bird Initiative ([www.audubon.org/conservation/migratory-bird-initiative](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/migratory-bird-initiative)) which promotes improving the safety of bird migration with participation by all Audubon chapters. Of the many approaches to helping the migratory process, helping with night time excess lighting is just one step. The essay below, written by Dana Loy, is what we would like all our members and friends to appreciate as part of the multi-step process that National Audubon is laying before us. It is the first of multiple articles that will surely follow. The full proclamation sent to Dona Ana County follows.*

### **Lights Out Las Cruces**

It's time for migrating birds to pass through southern New Mexico. We can help them stay safe by turning down the nighttime lights and keeping our beautiful skies dark.

The National Audubon Society promotes dark skies for migrating birds through its Lights Out program, and locally, the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society is leading that effort for New Mexico. During April, at our request, the Las Cruces City Council and the Doña Ana County Commissioners issued a Lights Out for Birds proclamation, clearing the way for bird-friendly night skies in our region, especially during the spring and fall migrations.

When birds pass over cities and towns lit up by too many lights, they tend to fly toward the brightness, crashing into buildings or circling for hours, wasting energy and becoming vulnerable to other threats. Add glaring lights to the countless other dangers in the lives of birds, and millions more will die each year.

MVAS believes that if most people knew about the harms of excessive lighting, they would lower or turn off many of their outdoor lights to help save birds, reduce electricity waste, and see the stars. We advocate lowering the lights during bird migration and strong enforcement and strengthening of our city's lighting ordinances throughout the year.

By alerting our City Council and County Commissioners to the bright-lights issue and asking for the proclamation, MVAS has made a first step toward keeping our skies safe for birds while supporting Las Cruces' sustainability and climate goals through reducing energy use. The proclamation asks that lights be dimmed from April 22 to May 12 and September 6 to October 29 during the hours of 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

Dark skies not only help protect birds; they're also calming and beautiful. They let the stars shine through and are good for the physical and behavioral health of all animals, including people. But dark skies can disappear, as we've seen in much of the country. That loss is creeping into our region, too: aerial photographs show a persistent glare over Las Cruces. If we don't act soon, the beauty of the night in southern New Mexico will vanish, and once our beloved dark skies are gone, they won't be back.

by Dana Loy

# Proclamation

*Doña Ana County  
State of New Mexico*

WHEREAS, "Lights Out" is a countrywide effort of the National Audubon Society to reduce the problem of bird deaths due to outdoor lighting being implemented in many communities; and

WHEREAS, birds add beauty to our lives, have tremendous environmental significance, provide agricultural ecosystem services such as insect control, and the hobby of bird watching contributes to the sustainable economic development of our region through sustainable tourism; and

WHEREAS, Doña Ana County is located within an important bird migration corridor through which millions of birds pass through each spring and fall on their journey to breeding or wintering grounds as far north as Alaska and as far south as Argentina. Specifically, the Rio Grande River Valley contains vital stopover habitat for migrating birds, and New Mexico is home to world-famous migration stopover sites like Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, which host hundreds of thousands of migrating waterfowl annually; and

WHEREAS, the majority of birds migrate at night, using the moon and stars to help them navigate—but birds become disoriented by bright lights on the ground, and millions die in the United States every year because of light-induced collisions, confusion, circling, and exhaustion; and

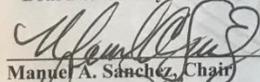
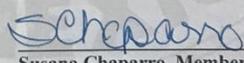
WHEREAS, in Doña Ana County, we encourage all New Mexicans and all agencies and entities to ensure that their adopted policies, regulations, and operating procedures avoid and/or minimize the use of external, decorative, and unnecessary lighting each day of the critical migration periods between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. to help ensure safe passage for birds migrating through Doña Ana County and southern New Mexico; and

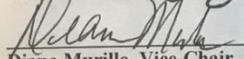
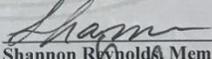
NOW THEREFORE, the Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim in honor of migrating birds, the New Mexico critical migration periods, April 22 to May 12 and September 6 to October 29, as:

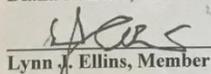
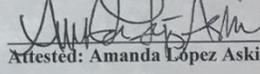
## Lights Out for Birds in Doña Ana

PROUDLY PROCLAIMED this 26<sup>th</sup> day of April 2022

Board of County Commissioners for Doña Ana County, New Mexico

  yea  nay   yea  nay  
Manuel A. Sanchez, Chair Susana Chaparro, Member

  yea  nay   yea  nay  
Diana Murillo, Vice-Chair Shannon Reynolds, Member

  yea  nay   yea  nay  
Lynn J. Ellins, Member Attested: Amanda Lopez Askin, Ph.D., County Clerk

